

# LAS LEARNING ALERTS

*Library Association of Singapore*



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*The LAS Learning Alerts, an initiative by the Training and Development Committee, aims to keep librarians informed about the latest trends and updates within our library network.*

*Please contact us at [training@las.org.sg](mailto:training@las.org.sg) if you wish to contribute materials for LAS Learning Alerts.*

## Digital Preservation and Archiving Projects

In this issue, we explore how the two libraries are advancing digital preservation and managing emerging digital collections. Teams at the National Library Board and SUTD Library are developing strategies to safeguard digital materials, from traditional collections to innovative formats like 3D student prototypes. Key practices include setting clear goals, integrating workflows, fostering collaboration, and proactively addressing challenges to ensure long-term access and usability.

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## Tell us more about yourself/your team and your role in your institution

The Digital Heritage team oversees the National Library's digital collections and leverages technology to expand access and use of our collections. We collaborate closely with internal teams and stakeholders across NLB for the full lifecycle management of our digital materials from creation to access and preservation. The rich variety of our digital heritage materials are accessible on the National Library Online webpage (<https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/nlonline>).

As a librarian and part of the National Library's Digital Heritage team, one of my roles is to work across different teams to select and prepare materials for digitisation, and review metadata documents used for ingestion to assure proper long term digital preservation and access of the National Library's Singapore heritage digital content.



***Charlyn Ang, Librarian  
Digital Heritage (Collections)  
National Library Singapore***

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## Could you share one or two digital preservation or archiving projects that the team has worked on, and what made them particularly interesting or challenging?

As one of the key memory institutions, the National Library's custodian role is to preserve the documentary and published heritage of Singapore. These records serve as the social memory of our nation, allowing generations of Singaporeans to research, understand, and build a collective identity shaped by our shared experiences and connections. Our team works with other librarians to select, digitise and digitally preserve Singapore's heritage materials to build our collective memory as well as support innovation and digital scholarship. The challenge lies in optimising our available resources while preserving as much as we can, with factors such as cultural significance, historical value and physical condition usually considered during the selection process.

Another challenge we faced was finding a long-term solution to the growing storage needs which had resulted from ongoing preservation of textual and microfilm records digitised as large, 400ppi high-resolution TIFF files. Our team conducted an environmental scan and sought recommendations from international digital preservation experts, eventually adopting the lossless Lempel-Ziv-Welch (LZW) compression algorithm for digitised text-based materials to reduce the size of our preservation files and allow us to maximise our current storage capacity. We have more information on NLB's digitisation and preservation masters specifications in our resource guide, *Caring for your digital collections* (<https://reference.nlb.gov.sg/guides/digital-preservation/main/caring-digital/#9-annex--digitisation-specifications>).

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## Based on your experience, what are one or two practices you would recommend to libraries planning or scaling up digital preservation initiatives?

Start with the end in mind. Having a clear purpose to why a project is started is the best north star that can guide the who, what, when, where, and how. In terms of scaling up initiatives, it could be difficult allocating resources when everything seems important, pulling our attention in all directions at once. However, working backwards with the end goal in mind helps us identify and differentiate between what is negotiable and what is necessary. A goal gives form to nebulous ideas, making it easier for everyone to align and work together. It also promotes greater flexibility by encouraging everyone to brainstorm, explore and trial solutions to maximise their limited resources.

Another good practice applicable to initiatives of any size is to have a knowledge management process in place. While the topic of digital preservation is relatively technical, it is ultimately a practice centred around people and their decisions. The setbacks caused by knowledge lost whenever an experienced practitioner leaves their position could be mild or detrimental, depending on the organisation's knowledge management process. Formal courses on digital preservation may be hard to come by; thus, it is most pertinent a well-thought-out knowledge management process is put in place for the continuity of digital preservation.

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## What skills or mindsets have proven most critical for the team when working on digital preservation and archiving projects?

Often neglected and understated, good communication is a skill that can bridge gaps caused by knowledge and expertise mismatches. Digital preservation spans across multiple disciplines and cross-divisional functions, directly involving skillsets from professionals such as data analysts, researchers, developers, librarians, and archivists, requiring all involved parties to understand each other to effectively achieve desired outcomes.

Yet, it is common to see misunderstandings arise from teams not fully understanding each other. To overcome this, we should make the effort to speak the same “language”, and translating technical jargon into layman’s terms could be helpful in engaging business owners. Good communication is a cornerstone of any successful project, and it ensures everyone is working towards the same goals.

## Are there emerging challenges, formats, or risks in digital preservation that you think librarians should start preparing for now?

Broadly speaking, there is always much to do in digital preservation. These range from identifying technological dependencies and gaps, calculating risks faced by growing concerns such as obsolescence, security, data loss, etc to training or employing staff with relevant skills to handle these issues. For example, Andrew Jackson from the Digital Preservation Coalition shares in his blog that there are at least 12,000 distinct file formats floating around in the digital world. How do we find the software to read these formats and best manage the data within them? How can we capture descriptive, preservation, and technical metadata optimally?

These are critical questions to consider in any digital preservation initiative after all, and a helpful starting point would be to cultivate good digital preservation practices. Steps such as virus checks, format identification, validation and normalisation/migration, and regular fixity checks are, in essence, proactive rather than reactive. Every step is invaluable in preserving any digital file for long term access.

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## Tell us more about yourself/your team and your role in your institution



**Zoe Yeo**  
**Deputy Manager**  
**SUTD Library**

I am a librarian at the SUTD Library, where I oversee scholarly communications, and support work in training and literacy and research services.

Our team is relatively small, and we work closely with faculty, students, and internal stakeholders to support access to and management of research and learning outputs. In recent years, part of our work has involved exploring how the library can support newer forms of outputs beyond traditional publications, particularly within a design-AI focused institution like SUTD.

## Could you share one or two digital preservation or archiving projects that the team has worked on, and what made them particularly interesting or challenging?

SUTD Library, together with other stakeholders, are currently exploring a 3D digital archiving initiative for student prototypes. At SUTD, students produce many physical models as part of their coursework, but these are often not retained over time due to space constraints, uncertainty around what to keep, and the fact that students themselves may not keep their prototypes after submission. These prototypes are not just records of past work but hold practical and significant value. They can serve as references for future students, support teaching and critique, provide insight into design processes over time, and also form part of a portfolio that students can draw on when they enter the workforce.

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This has prompted us to consider whether digital surrogates could be a more sustainable alternative. However, scanning everything is also resource-intensive and not practical at scale.

One approach the project team explored is to work with faculty to incorporate scanning into the submission process, so that a digital version is captured at the point of completion. This helps ensure that at least one version is retained without requiring retrospective collection.

In parallel, we have also experimented with setting up low-cost, in-house 3D scanning stations within the library. These are designed to be easily accessible and operable by students, relying on LiDAR-enabled mobile devices (e.g., iPhones) to capture scans. After scanning, students submit their models via a mobile application on the device, which is linked to eDimension (assignment submission portal). The scans are also made available to the library for preservation. While this approach does not produce high-end outputs, the quality is sufficient for documentation and reference purposes and offers a more scalable and practical approach within current resource constraints.



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As this is still in an exploratory phase, the main challenges are around defining scope, managing expectations, and understanding what is feasible in terms of workflow and resources.

In parallel, the library is also in the process of implementing an Institutional Repository, which will provide a more structured platform to support access and management of digital outputs. This is still under development.

### **Based on your experience, what are one or two practices you would recommend to libraries planning or scaling up digital preservation initiatives?**

One useful approach is to start small and test workflows early. Rather than trying to design a full-scale solution upfront, it helps to pilot with a specific use case and refine from there. Another is to embed processes into existing workflows where possible. For example, integrating digital capture into submission processes may be more sustainable than trying to collect materials after the fact.

It is also important to be realistic about capacity and to prioritise based on institutional needs.

### **What skills or mindsets have proven most critical for the team when working on digital preservation and archiving projects?**

A practical mindset has been important. Being clear about what is feasible within current constraints and being open to adjusting plans as we learn more.

Collaboration is also key. Much of this work depends on working with different stakeholders and faculty and understanding how their teaching and submission processes operate.

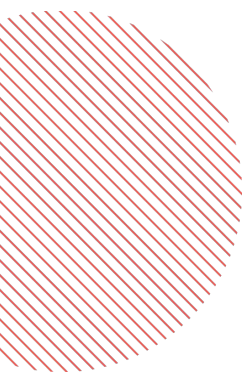
On a skills level, the ability to manage evolving workflows and coordinate across different stakeholders has been important, especially since these initiatives cut across multiple areas.

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## Are there emerging challenges, formats, or risks in digital preservation that you think librarians should start preparing for now?

One area we are paying attention to is the increasing presence of non-traditional outputs, such as 3D models and more interactive or mixed-reality-based formats. These do not always fit into existing repository structures or workflows.

There is also a broader question of scale, for example, how to decide what to capture and how much effort to invest in different types of materials. As institutions begin to explore these areas, it may be useful to focus on defining clear scope and use cases early, rather than trying to address everything at once.



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## Learning Resources

- **Library of Congress – Digital Preservation (DPOE)**  
<https://www.digitalpreservation.gov/education/courses/>  
*Focus:* Introductory training, basic concepts, workflows
- **Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC) – Learning Portal**  
<https://www.dpconline.org/digipres/prof-development/dp-learning-portal>  
*Focus:* Aggregated courses, toolkits, global best practices
- **Society of American Archivists (SAA) – Digital Archives Specialist (DAS)**  
<https://www2.archivists.org/prof-education/das>  
*Focus:* Structured certification, lifecycle of digital archives
- **Digital Preservation Handbook (DPC)**  
<https://www.dpconline.org/handbook>  
*Focus:* Practical guidance (metadata, storage, workflows, risk)
- **NDSA Levels of Digital Preservation**  
<https://ndsa.org/publications/levels-of-digital-preservation/>  
*Focus:* Maturity model, benchmarking preservation readiness
- **Digital Preservation Architecture Training**  
<https://datastatresearch.com/courses/training-course-on-advanced-digital-preservation-architectures>  
*Focus:* OAIS, repository design, infrastructure
- **OAIS Reference Model (ISO 14721)**  
<https://public.ccsds.org/pubs/650x0m2.pdf>  
*Focus:* Conceptual framework for digital preservation systems
- **PREMIS (Preservation Metadata Standard)**  
<https://www.loc.gov/standards/premis/>  
*Focus:* Preservation metadata standard
- **METS (Metadata Encoding & Transmission Standard)**  
<https://www.loc.gov/standards/mets/>  
*Focus:* Structural metadata for digital objects
- **Research Data Alliance (RDA)**  
<https://www.rd-alliance.org>  
*Focus:* Research data management, FAIR data, global collaboration
- **OpenAIRE Training**  
<https://www.openaire.eu/training>  
*Focus:* Open science, data sharing, compliance
- **Coursera – Digital Curation Courses**  
<https://www.coursera.org/courses?query=digital%20curation>  
*Focus:* Flexible courses on digital archives & curation
- **FutureLearn – Digital Archiving Courses**  
<https://www.futurelearn.com/search?q=digital+archiving>  
*Focus:* Short practical courses, applied skills

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## Upcoming webinars and conferences:

### *Community Archives Digital Preservation Toolkit - Global Ambassadors Training*

*Online via Zoom*

[Link](#)

**Tue 21 Apr 2026 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM SGT**

Join Karyn Williamson, Digital Preservation Specialist at the DPC and Robin Wright, Head Australasia & Asia-Pacific at this online session to introduce the DPC's Community Archives Digital Preservation Toolkit and explain plans for a Global Ambassador pilot project in our region in 2026.



### *Digital Preservation Awards 2026*

*by Digital Preservation Coalition*



[Link](#)

***Submission Deadline: 5 May***

Organized by the Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC) every two years, the prestigious Digital Preservation Awards celebrate the work of our welcoming, inclusive, and innovative global community and focuses on initiatives, projects and collaborations in the digital preservation field, and have been been completed since the last awards round between August 2024 and July 2026

[Submission Instructions](#)

## Upcoming webinars and conferences:

### *The 10th International Conference on Libraries, Information Society 2026 (ICoLIS 2026)*

*Resorts World Langkawi*

[Link](#)

**21st - 23rd October 2026**

The conference aims to bring together Library & Information Science (LIS) professionals to share new ideas, and application experiences face to face, establish business or research relations, and find global partners for future collaboration.



### *The LATUL 46th Annual Conference*

*University of Johannesburg (UJ), South Africa*

[Link](#)

**22nd - 26th November 2026**

Join global thought leaders, library professionals, academics, and innovators at this landmark event that celebrates knowledge, collaboration, and transformation in the world of academic librarianship and information services.

Call for papers is **now open**.

